



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Maryland Health Officials Encourage Residents to Get Flu Vaccine Now

BALTIMORE, MD (December 5, 2011) – In recognition of National Influenza Vaccination Week, Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), and health officials throughout the state encourage all residents to receive their annual seasonal influenza vaccinations now if they have not done so already.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has designated the week of December 4 – 10 as National Influenza Vaccination Week. According to CDC, it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. Therefore, CDC recommends early vaccination to ensure that as many people as possible are protected during the current flu season.

“Our priority is keeping all Marylanders healthy and safe,” Dr. Sharfstein said. “I urge all Maryland residents to get their flu vaccines before it’s too late.”

DHMH also reminds all Marylanders to use preventive measures during this flu season. These actions include frequent and thorough hand washing, covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and staying home from work or school if you are sick.

Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache and muscle aches, and extreme fatigue. While most people recover from an influenza virus infection, some persons may be at risk for more serious complications, including death.

Residents in high risk categories are encouraged to contact their physician or healthcare provider as soon as they experience any flu symptoms, especially fever and cough, to find out if they may benefit from anti-viral medications. If taken early in the course of the flu, these medications can help decrease the length of illness. Also, persons over 65 years of age should check with their healthcare provider to make sure they are vaccinated for pneumococcal disease.

Other tips on avoiding flu are available on the DHMH website at www.dhmh.maryland.gov, and from the CDC website's flu information web pages at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

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